

Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas

CHAPTER XXV

Jacob Linn
Bexar County

IN 1833 when a ship loaded with German immigrants landed at Indianola, Daniel Linn, his daughter and young son, Jacob, were among the group. They had left the homeland and all their ties to come to Texas and grow up with the country. During the voyage the mother died and was buried at sea. After some delay at Indianola, they started with the ox-cart train for San Antonio. The father died when they reached Port Lavaca, probably of cholera. The two children escaped the fatal epidemic. But the Linn daughter died shortly after their arrival in San Antonio. The little eight-year-old Jacob was thus left alone in a new and sparsely-settled country among strangers.

The Linns were devout Catholics and Father Maynes who had been established in San Antonio as first supernumerary chaplain since 1808, adopted young Jacob and cared for him as a son. He was given the best education in both Spanish and English of that time. He was a brilliant student.

But according to the custom of the old country it was necessary for him to learn a trade. He liked to create things with his hands that required much skill and fine workmanship. And he loved fine wood, so he became an apprentice to a gunsmith.

By the time he was grown he had a gun shop of his own. In those days every man prided himself on possessing as complete an assortment of guns as his means permitted, so naturally the gun business was a very profitable one. Very soon he had the most completely equipped shop in the new world. Gifted with the

genius of an artist, the arms and guns he created were the most finished and perfect specimens of the gunmaker's art. He catered to the rich and the poor. He made arms plain and untrimmed, but always the wood was polished until it reminded one of a beautiful old piece of mellowed velvet. He also created other guns with a rising scale of value, elaborate in design and carefully decorated and sometimes inlaid with gold or silver trimming which would appeal to the most fastidious *Don*.

The new world had been good to the lonely German boy. Father Maynes had remembered him in his will. He amassed a small fortune through his own efforts.

But the thing he wanted most was a home of his own. Although he was very young when last he saw his parents, he always remembered his mother kissing him and his sister good-night as she tucked them in under the warm covers. Then the father and mother would talk and talk. Father Maynes was good to him, but he was not a *family*.

Just across the Plaza in what is known now as the Governor's Palace lived the Ignacio Perez family. Senora Perez, a gracious aristocratic lady, was kind to the lonely Jacob and he was a welcome guest in their home. Jacob went to school with the Perez children. As he grew older he could not remember when he began loving Josefa Perez, one of the daughters.

Old Texas Family

The Perez family belonged to the "Four Hundred," many of whom traced their blood back to Spanish Royalty. Naturally their every day life was characterized to a great extent by the old Spanish custom of Mexico. From 10:00 o'clock in the morning until 4 in the afternoon the plazas were empty and all the doors closed. After lunch every one took a *siesta*, then a bath, followed by a cup of coffee, after which the ladies usually did their shopping. Throughout the day Jacob worked earnestly, but as the late afternoon approached he managed to

By MYRTLE MURRAY

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watch through the shop window hoping to catch a glimpse of lovely Josefa Perez.

After school was out the Perez family usually moved out to the ranch house about 12 miles from town. This land had been granted to Don Ignacio Perez by the King of Spain. He was a well-known Indian fighter and a colonel in the Spanish Royalists forces. For his bravery in the Battle of Medina in 1813 he was granted a large tract of land on the Medina River, on what is now known as the Applewhite Road.

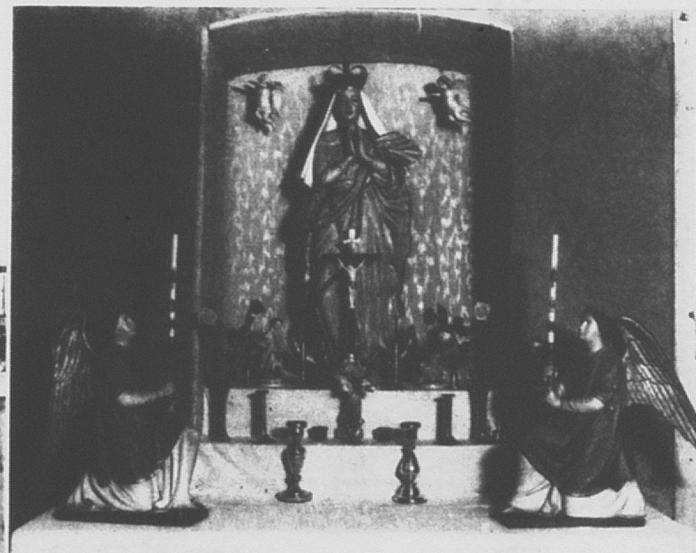
This became the headquarters for the Perez ranch. Josefa loved the ranch. Here she could ride and hunt with a freedom that was impossible in the cramped house in town.

She was not afraid of the Indians. During their unwelcome visits to San Antonio they had sometimes frightened people, especially the negro slaves. They seem to think the plazas, which did resemble an Indian village, were ideal camping grounds. Frequently they camped very near her home. Their oxen drank from the San Antonio River nearby, but they never harmed nor frightened her.

Then, too, she loved horses and cattle. Gradually the family spent more and more time on the ranch but they came into town for special occasions. Two celebrations of special interest were started in 1850, 5 years before Jacob Linn and Josefa Perez were married. *Las Pasodas* and *Los Pastores*, a dramatic story of the nativity of Christ as seen through the eyes of the Shepherds of Bethlehem. *Los Pastores* was probably a relic of *Pastores de Belen* of Old Spain.



The old Jacob Linn ranch home. On the porch are the late Frank T. Walsh and his wife, nee Concepcion Linn, their children, Mary and Anita Walsh, and Rev. Domingo Vento.



The altar in the old Linn home. There is an exact replica in the Mrs. Frank Walsh ranch home today. The statuary, etc., is the same as in the old house.



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It is supposed to have been introduced in this country by the missionaries who accompanied Hernando Cortez in 1519. It became a traditional occasion with the Aztecs. During the early days of the Texas missions it appeared again. When it was revived in San Antonio in 1850 it retained many of the characteristics of the early portrayal. It was interesting to both the participants and audience.

The *Las Pasodas* preceded the *Los Pastores*, and represents the nine days of wandering of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Joseph in search of shelter in Bethlehem just before the birth of the Savior.

Another celebration of importance began on June 24 and lasted until June 29. This marked the opening of the fruit and vegetable season. Each day's festivities began in the early morning with religious ceremonies in the Catholic churches. In the afternoon there were horse races, cock fights and other amusements, closing with a grand ball at night. Some of the most famous balls were held in the Perez home. And many admiring glances followed the handsome Jacob Linn as he guided the graceful Josefa Perez through the stately old dances.

When they were married their combined property made quite an estate. During the first few years of their marriage the Jacob Linn's lived in San Antonio.

Mrs. Linn's first thought was making a home and later caring for her two little daughters, Trinidad and Concepcion, but she was her husband's business confidant. Mr. Linn continued to direct his own thriving business and to manage other property he had accumulated. Mrs. Linn had inherited several leagues of land (including the headquarters of the old Perez ranch house) from her parents at their death. She knew the ranching business of her time and she soon learned how to manage her husband's shop. He had always loved fine horses and cattle and had had some experience in managing ranching interests of his own, so it was only natural that she would take charge of the shop when her husband was needed to direct the ranch activities. It was a matter of great pride to both of them that both could direct either business with practically equal skill.

Finally they moved to the ranch but continued to keep a room in what is now known as the Governor's Palace which

they occupied when in town. The entire family preferred to live in the country, especially in the spring. The hills were covered with great blankets of bluebonnets splashed with Indian paintbrushes. Then came millions of other wild flowers—phlox, sweet william and wild verbena. They were live masterpieces of art, created by the Master Painter, and the Linn family loved every inch of the soil clothed in such beauty.

In the rambling ranch house of thirteen rooms, Mrs. Linn was happier than she had ever been before. Mrs. Frank Walsh (nee Concepcion Linn), her daughter, and children live on the ranch today, and while it requires only a few minutes to motor the distance of some twelve miles to the heart of San Antonio now, at that time it required a full day to go from there to the city for supplies. For many weeks during the rainy season it was impossible to make the trip at all. So everything possible was produced at home. She personally directed the servants and laborers. All kinds of vegetables and fruits were grown. The surplus was preserved to be used during the non-productive months.

Deer and wild turkeys could be had any time she wanted it. Beef and pork were

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available nearly any time of the year. The surplus could always be sold, but usually Mrs. Linn preferred to have the meat cured, smoked and hung in the smokehouse where other supplies were kept.

She was noted for her excellent cooking. She baked bread in big quantities in a large oven in the back yard. It was made from home-ground flour which was milled from home-grown wheat. The great oven—not unlike the ovens used by the Pueblo Indians of today—were heated with big beds of coals. Then the coals were taken out and large baking pans with the smooth even loaves of bread were placed on the oven shelves. The door was then fastened air tight. Mrs. Linn might permit the cook to mix the dough and mould the loaves, but she always attended to placing the pans of bread in the oven, fastened the doors, then took the bread out herself.

She took a great pride in making good bread and on baking delicious cakes of all kinds. Her *guisado*, or stew, was known all over the country. She placed young goat meat and green pumpkin or *callobasa*, ripe tomatoes, green peppers,

onions and fresh corn in a big iron kettle, added a little water and covered it with a lid and cooked down low, then served steaming hot. *Um-m-m-m!* The best ever!

One of Mrs. Linn's favorite desserts was individual pumpkin pie. She cut pumpkins into small squares including the rind, cooked it until tender in a small amount of water. After scraping the meat from the rind she mixed 1 pound of the pumpkin meat with one-half pound of sugar, seasoned with anise, cinnamon and very little cloves and put it into a jar and kept it ready for use. The individual pies were made by rolling out the pie crust and cutting it out the size of a saucer. The mixture was spread rather thickly over one-half of the crust, turning the other over the mixture and punching the edges firmly together and baked. Nothing better, her family thought.

There was always a supply of milk and butter on the ranch and the family enjoyed the home-made cheese. Mr. Linn always kept a supply of rennet when he killed a beef, washed it and let it dry. When Mrs. Linn was ready to make cheese she put a piece in the milk to

make it curdle. She did not use the first clabber, but put the whey in with the fresh milk. When it curdled she broke it with a spoon, put the curd into a cheese cloth and pressed it dry. After that it was ready to serve. She used the whey to start some more cheese.

The Linn's were devout Catholics but the nearest community church was four miles away. An altar was "set-up" in one of the rooms which was known as the church. A priest came once a month and said mass for the assembled family, servants and workmen. At first there was no music, so the priest sang and said mass. One room in the house was set aside as a guest room for the priest. He frequently worked out from there and while the priest was always a welcome and an honored guest, a visit from the bishop was indeed a great occasion.

They had taken the *madonna* from the Governor's Palace with them when they moved to the ranch. The room to the right of the *ante-sala*, or living room, was called the *Room of the Blessed Virgin* because of a goodly size *madonna* that once occupied a niche in the north wall. In homes of high families in Spain it

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was customary to have a room containing an altar to be used as a private chapel. Colonel Ignacio Perez, an ancestor of Josefa Perez Linn, one of the ad interim Governors of Texas, and the last governor to live in the Palace, bequeathed the statue to his daughter, Trinidad, who was a quiet girl and religiously inclined. She never married. In later years she made her home with her niece, Concepcion Perez Linn Walsh, to whom she bequeathed the statue. It is now in the private chapel of the Walsh family at the old Perez or Jacob Linn ranch.

A replica of the altar in the early ranch house is in the present ranch house where Mrs. Frank Walsh lives today. She and her late husband continued the venerable custom of having the priest come out once a month and say mass for her family and workmen. And every one of her

married children have been married at the altar in present ranch house.

Mr. Linn dreamed of the time when he would build a church for the community and he had the church bell made. But he died before it was started. Later the bell was given to a nearby community church by his son.

And right here it might be interesting to know how the Perez home came to be known as the "Governor's Palace." Colonel Ignacio Perez had two children, Gertrudis and Jose Ignacio Perez. The family was living in the Palace when the Spanish Governor, Antonio Cordero arrived in San Antonio in 1806 to rule the Texas province. Colonel Perez graciously invited the Governor to make his home with him. The Governor fell in love with the lovely Gertrudis Perez. Their wed-

ding dinner was celebrated in the *salon de baile* or ballroom of the Palace.

The Governor remained in office about four years. He lived in the Palace and had his office there. He ruled with such polish and grace that he soon won the admiration of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

The Palace remained in the possession of the Perez heirs until 1929, when it was sold to the City of San Antonio. It has been restored and is now one of the show places of San Antonio. Colonel Ignacio Perez was Governor ad interim, 1814 to 1817. He continued to live in the Palace during that time.

But to return to the Linn family: There were servants to help with the work though everything was done with crude equipment. The modern conveniences of today were unknown. The wash-

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ing and ironing for the large personnel was a big job. The only lights were candles moulded on the ranch.

The children were first taught on the ranch by a private teacher. Later they were sent to school in San Antonio. Both of the girls were natural artists, and Concepcion took training at the Convent in Victoria.

The sheep industry was in its infancy. The output of agricultural products was inadequate for the home demand, so Mr. Linn produced feed at home. He raised cotton, corn and cane. The corn was used for feed and was also a cash crop. Buyers from far and near bought their seed corn at the ranch. The cane was made into syrup. The fodder was cut and put into bundles. He did not let anything go to waste.

Mr. Linn was a rare combination for a man of that time. He was an artist in his line, a successful business man and a practical farmer and ranchman. He loved the beauty of the waving field of corn, yet he realized its importance as a feed for the stock and food for his family.

Jacob Linn loved fine horses. He always kept a good saddle for himself and a side-saddle for Mrs. Linn and one of their greatest joys was to slip away and go hunting together. Mrs. Linn carried her gun of the finest workmanship inlaid in gold which Mr. Linn had made for her. She was an excellent marksman and took as great a pride in their array of guns as did her husband.

At first the ranching business consisted mainly of breeding and the care of horses. There were bands of different colors. He could fill an order for a car-

load of bays or blazes or sorrels nearly any time when requested. There was one snowy white bunch with long curly manes that he proudly presented to Mrs. Linn. Many times the managers of the big circuses bought their horses from him because they could get any number desired, perfectly matched.

The colts were branded about once a year, but each stallion took care of his *manada*. He guarded his mares and kept them separate from the mares in other *manadas* and brought them to blocks of salt which were placed near the ranch house so they would be attracted to it. This eliminated much riding to see after them.

The stallions were gentle and could be used for saddle horses but were never worked in the field. A "horse breaker" was always kept on the ranch. Colts were "broken" for riding when about three or four years old. That was a real rodeo. The "horse breaker" handled his horse as gently as possible under the circumstances and he enjoyed his job, but he did not indulge in any stunts like they did in town.

When the cowboys went into San Antonio they usually went immediately to the famous market lunchroom where negro cooks broiled the finest steaks in the South and whose coffee was as good as that boiled over the campfire. The

cowboys, with their high crown, wide-brimmed hats, their long six-shooters dangling carelessly but significantly from cowhide belts, were colorful figures. After indulging in such good food, and sometimes drinks, they were ready for fun.

Mounting their ponies they tossed coins on the ground, then rode away some distance to gain momentum for their return. Then with a Comanche yell, the rider would swoop down on the coins and pick them up while still hanging by one leg to the saddle. They were experts at this and many other stunts which furnished both amusement and consternation to the town people.

There were no fences during Jacob Linn's time. His horses and cattle grazed in several counties, so when branding time came it meant weeks away from home. Mrs. Linn enjoyed the hurry and excitement of supervising the packing of the chuck wagon with food for the trip, while Mr. Linn was seeing after other preparations. After Mr. Linn and the cowboys were gone she was again in charge of the ranch and farm activities. They kept the same servants and workers for years and she and her daughters did not feel so lonely.

As Mr. Linn grew older he stayed at home more and devoted much of his spare time to wood carving. He had made doll furniture for his little girls and then he made a beautiful dining table for Mrs. Linn. He started other pieces of furniture, but died before he finished them.

Mr. Linn died in 1878. Mrs. Linn and her daughters continued on the ranch until her death in 1889.

One of the daughters, Trinidad, is dead. Concepcion married Frank Walsh, a well-known ranchman, in 1891. They continued to live on the land that was granted to Colonel Ignacio Perez when the Spanish flag waved over Texas. Mr. Walsh passed away a few months ago but Mrs. Walsh and her children are still living on the ranch.

Livestock Calendar



Purebred Hereford Sales

Jan. 6—Horse Shoe Ranch, Hickory, Okla.
 Jan. 8—Turner Ranch, Sulphur, Okla.
 Jan. 9—Dillard & Jackson, Ringling, Okla.
 Jan. 11—Harrisdale Farms, Fort Worth.
 Jan. 16—Denver Show Hereford sale, Denver, Colo.
 Jan. 22—R. L. Cocanougher, Hereford.
 Jan. 26—Eastern New Mexico Breeders, Roswell, N. Mex.
 Feb. 2—Clay County Breeders, Henrietta.
 Feb. 6—Brown County Breeders, Brownwood.
 Feb. 8—Mason County Breeders, Mason.
 Feb. 9—Central S. Tex. Breeders, San Antonio.
 Feb. 10—Central Texas Breeders' Sale, Belton.
 Feb. 13—D. L. McDonald, Hereford.
 Feb. 14—Taylor County Breeders, Abilene.
 Feb. 19—Breeders' Sale, Sweetwater.
 Feb. 23—Shackelford County Breeders, Albany.
 Feb. 28—South Texas Breeders, Beaverville.
 Mar. 2—Breeders' Sale, San Angelo.
 Mar. 6—Panhandle Breeders, Amarillo.
 Mar. 12—Texas Hereford Ass'n., Fort Worth.

Polled Herefords

Feb. 21—Breeders Sale, Brownwood.
 Feb. 22—White Hereford Farm, Keller.
 Mar. 18—Texas Polled Hereford Assn., Fort Worth.

General

Jan. 5-11—Livestock Show, Ogden, Utah.
 Jan. 10—Conv. Florida State Cattlemen's Assn., Panama City, Fla.
 Jan. 11-13—Conv. Am. Natl. L. S. Assn., Denver, Colo.
 Jan. 18-20—National Western Stock Show, Denver, Colo.
 Jan. 23-25—Conv. Natl. Wool Growers Assn., Casper, Wyo.
 Feb. 19-20—Conv. Arizona Cattle Growers Assn., Nogales, Ariz.
 Feb. 21-24—S. W. Tex. Boys' Fat Stock Show, San Antonio.
 Feb. 21-26—Livestock Show, Tucson, Ariz.
 March 1-4—Fat Stock Show, San Angelo.
 March 3-6—Amarillo Fat Stock Show, Amarillo.
 March 6-8—Conv. Kansas Livestock Assn., Wichita, Kans.
 March 8-17—S. W. Expo. & Fat Stock Show, Fort Worth.
 March 12-14—64th Annual Convention, Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Assn., Fort Worth.
 March 18-19—Conv. New Mexico Cattle Growers Assn., Gallup, N. Mex.
 March 23-31—Houston Fat Stock Show, Houston.

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